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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 002393

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SUBJECT: KERRY-LUGAR LEGISLATION CRITICIZED BY OPPOSITION,  
DEFENDED BY PPP DURING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DISCUSSION

Classified By: Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During an October 5 National Assembly session, the opposition PML-N sharply criticized the Kerry-Lugar bill's perceived conditionality, while the PPP defended the government's approach toward the legislation and maintained that the conditions are in synch with Pakistan's own interests. Prime Minister Gilani assured the Ambassador that the government will not let parliament vote on a resolution on Kerry-Lugar and that the government would actively support the bill during the debate. He did, however, recommend that the Ambassador reach out to Chief of Army Staff Kayani, who reportedly had some concerns -- which the Ambassador will do tomorrow. ANP leader Asfandiyar Wali also voiced support for the bill in a conversation with Ambassador. In a meeting with the Ambassador, PML leaders Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Mushahid Hussain criticized the bill's "pandering" to the Indian lobby, its lack of recognition for Pakistan's sacrifices in the fight against terrorism, and its reopening of the nuclear proliferation issue, which they considered closed. Despite their criticisms of the Pakistan government's handling of the issue, neither expected any resolution against taking American assistance. End Summary.

¶2. (U) During a National Assembly session on the evening of October 5, PML-N MNA and leader of the parliamentary opposition Chaudhry Nisar sharply criticized the Kerry-Lugar legislation. He maintained that the bill is designed to serve only the interests of the United States, and that its conditions are against Pakistan's interests, violate the country's self-respect, and compromise its sovereignty. "We've been bugging the U.S. for aid for 60 years, but these conditions are unprecedented in our history," Nisar argued. The legislation, he pointed out, was originally called Biden-Lugar. Work on it began during the Musharraf period, and "it's basically the same now as it was originally." (NOTE: Before launching into his discussion of Kerry-Lugar, Nisar listed several "burning" problems of the day -- including the Balochistan insurgency, drone attacks, and "foreign interference" in domestic law and order -- said they all resulted from ex-President Musharraf, and called for Musharraf to be tried for treason under Article 6 of the Constitution. END NOTE.) Kerry-Lugar, Nisar argued, must be debated in the National Assembly.

¶3. (U) PML parliamentary leader Makhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat followed with brief, muddled comments on Kerry-Lugar. He appeared ready to attack the legislation, but then pulled

back. In the end, he said that recent press reporting that the U.S. is poised to launch drone strikes in Quetta, taken together with the military assistance provided by Kerry-Lugar, indicates that the U.S. believes the Pakistani government is incapable of tackling Quetta by itself.

14. (U) PPP MNA and Federal Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira followed with a 30-minute defense of the government's position on Kerry-Lugar. First, he conceded that Kerry-Lugar had started as Biden-Lugar, but said this means the conditions are nothing new, since there were conditions in the earlier legislation. Second, he said that President Zardari, as well as Prime Minister Gilani and other senior officials, went to the U.S. and other western governments and explained to them that Pakistan's current problems -- extremism, Talibanization, the transformation of the country from a social welfare state to a security state, the concomitant lack of resources for development, etc. -- are a result of superpower conflict of the past. Zardari was not begging for Pakistan, Qamar Zaman argued, he was only asking for Pakistan's due, in accordance with its dignity. Thanks to the Pakistani government's interactions with the Obama Administration, the U.S. recognizes that Pakistan has suffered a lot and that it should make good on Pakistan's losses since the "war on terrorism" is a global war, not just Pakistan's.

15. (U) Qamar Zaman pointed out that Kerry-Lugar's conditions do not apply to its civilian development assistance, just to its military assistance. He repeatedly stressed that in any event, the conditions are U.S. law, not Pakistani law, and

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are not "binding" on Pakistan. If the U.S. Administration can not certify that Pakistan has met the conditions, the result will only be a loss of military assistance, nothing more.

16. (U) Qamar Zaman implored all MNAs to actually read the legislation. He then went point by point through the conditions. (NOTE: In fact, he actually went through each of the certification requirements of Kerry-Lugar's Section 203(c), as well as several of the requirements for the monitoring reports mandated by Section 302(a). End Note.) Qamar Zaman argued that the each of the conditions is, in fact, in synch with Pakistan's own interests. Even in the absence of Kerry-Lugar, Pakistan is and should be countering and cooperating internationally on proliferation, fighting terrorism, and preventing terrorists from using Pakistan as a base against other countries. Turning to the condition that the military must not be subverting the civilian authorities, Qamar Zaman argued that this is the government's policy. It is supported by all democratic parties and the military itself is committed to working within the constitutional framework.

17. (C) In advance of the parliamentary session, post attempted to reach out to party leaders from across party lines to address their concerns about the Kerry-Lugar legislation. Prime Minister Gilani assured the Ambassador on October 5 that the government actively supported the Kerry-Lugar bill and would vigorously defend it in the National Assembly. He promised that the government would not allow a parliamentary resolution or other action on the Kerry-Lugar bill even though debate might continue over the next few days. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Babar Awan made similar commitments to PolCouns. Prime Minister Gilani did flag for the Ambassador that Chief of Army Staff Kayani had some concerns with the legislation and suggested that post reach out to him directly -- something the Ambassador will do tomorrow Oct. 6.

18. (C) In a meeting with Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) President Ch. Shujaat Hussain and Secretary General Mushahid Hussain, Ambassador was told that the party's primary concerns with the Kerry-Lugar bill centered on provisions

which they felt were designed to pander to Indian concerns. Mushahid asserted that language on POTUS consulting with "other interested parties" in the region in preparing the required strategy was clearly a reference to India. Mushahid also criticized the bill,s references to Pakistan,s nuclear proliferation network, which he characterized as reopening a closed issue, and its references to Muridke, which he argued was more pandering to India. Shujaat and Mushahid both asserted that the bill was insufficiently "grateful" for the sacrifices that Pakistan had made in combating terrorism. Both inquired as to whether the bill could be reopened; the Ambassador told them that it could not. Both indicated that they felt the National Assembly and the Senate should have an open debate on the bill but assessed that no resolution or action would be forthcoming -- merely criticism along the lines noted above. Both Ambassador and PolCouns encouraged Mushahid and Shujaat to recognize the critical support that it provided to Pakistan. Ambassador separately spoke with Awami National Party (ANP) President Asfandiyar Wali, who told her that he had no concerns with the bill but would check with his other party members.

19. (C) Comment: Post anticipates that parliamentary debate in both the National Assembly and the Senate will continue on the Kerry-Lugar bill for the next few days. The bill is being used by the opposition as a way to criticize President Zardari and the government for their close relationship with the United States and to question their "nationalist" credentials. Post does not believe that any of the opposition parties genuinely want to see promised assistance withdrawn or refused and that the issue will die down once parties assess that they have scored as many political points as possible from the government. Post will continue to engage with parliamentarians, political leaders, and journalists to urge restraint, correct factual inaccuracies about the legislation, and to better inform interlocutors of the negative impact this "debate" may have on future donor assistance.

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